INTERVIEW WITH MR. DANIEL VAN METER

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Conducted by:

Dr. James L. Dodson

--and--

Miss Paula Boyer

Dodson: Could you give us your full name and tell us how long you've lived here in the valley?

Van Meter: Well, my name is Daniel Elias Van Meter and I have lived in this valley continuously since about 1946 but previous to that I was here in 1927 as a child and, uh, it was out on San Fernando road there used to be a big fertilizing out there and my father used to go out there to pick up chemicals and things, he was an industrial engineer and a scientist, so I used to go out to that place with him and I remember one time it was snowing. I'm sure it was 1927.

Dodson: I think you told us about your father coming out here very early. Could you tell us a little about your fathers coming?

Van Meter: Well, my father came to the valley, as far as I remember, about nineteen hundred and four. That was when he was first here. Then he went up to live in San Fransisco where he met my mother. It was more of a traveling experience because he lived in Texas at that time, when he wasn't in Europe. As a young man he was quite a prominent mining engineer and he had occasion to travel all around the world.

Dodson: So he came out originally in 1904 but he went back for awhile and then came out permanently?

Van Meter: Yes, well, my father was never really anywhere permanently. He traveled all over. I remember

in about 1921 he decided, we had a big place up in Marin county, up in San Raphael, and he decided that we should see the country. That is, the United States. And he had been the only one born in this country, the rest of us had all been born abroad, and that was eight in our family, and so we spent nine years traveling all over the United States; to every town, hamlet, city that had some historical qualities to it and we traveled down to the south and visited the old Van Meter plantations and anything that was connected with our family primarily. I remember seeing big road signs with the big beautiful engravings and the enamel with the big "Ike Van Meter stopped here" and "Ike Van Meter stopped here to see Washington." So, we got to thinking that we sort of owned the south but there were alot more places down there. So, we'd stop in some city and if it took a week to see the city, we'd take a week. If it took two months, we'd rent an apartment or something and spend two months, but I can tell you accounts of every state in the United States that we'd been to and it took nine years to do it. Nine years of travel and at that time we'd be going to school and that's why I went to twenty-nine different schools before I got to high school.

Dodson: I was going to ask you if you were educated here in the valley but I think you've just answered that.

Van Meter: Yes. I went to Manual Arts High School. That was the only school I went to for the full duration of

school and that was in Los Angeles but I did not attend other than, I took some courses at different periods and at different places but it was more of a pleasure course that I was enjoying.

Dodson: Uh, how long have you lived in Southern California continuously then, aside from the valley?

Van Meter: Uh, I've lived here since 1947 or '46.

Dodson: And before that you were here off and on with your father?

Van Meter: Yes. Different times. I spent, previous to that, I'd spent about eight years in San Antoine. That's where, and then previous to that Washington D.C. if I stayed any length of time it was in the District of Columbia. I remember going to the government offices and being curious when the chaplain would start praying from the vesitbul in different parts of the Congress. I couldn't quite hear what he was saying and so one time I had occasion to speak with him, and I was a child, so, I could've been a page boy but we never stayed there long enough, so I said to the chaplain, "what are you saying to the Congress," I mean, "are you praying?" He says, "yes." I says, "what do you pray for?" He says, " well, young man, maybe you don't understand but you will later on. Just remember what I say." He says, " I look at the Congress and I pray for the people." [Burst of laughter from all.] That's what he told me and it's so true.

Dodson: I see.

Boyer: He's not there any longer, the chaplain? I mean, it's not the same one?

Van Meter: No,not the one who said that, I'm sure.

Boyer: Can I ask, this doesn't have too much to do with the valley really, but where did you attend school as you traveled about?

Van Meter: Well, we would stay at some places for two or three months and so, mother would put me in school. I'd go to school for as long as I could, you know. Then we'd pick up and go to another city and so, then I, if we were there for any length of time, I'd go to school there.

Boyer: Did she carry your records around with you? Or, you didn't have any records?

Van Meter: You didn't need records so much in those days. You just went. They'd ask you a few questions and if you were breathing and you could hear, well, they'd put you in a classroom. I remember one class. They put me in the second grade. Then, the next day they put me in the third grade and then the fourth the next day. Then somebody said, "well, why don't you just do your whole high school here in a week."

[laughter from everyone]

Dodson: They went by what you could do rather than records I see.

Van Meter: Right. They didn't have all these experimental things. You know, where they have to test you for this or that and it wasn't social education. It was reading, writing and arithmatic. The basics of education by which you could teach yourself. In other words, they were teaching you the tools by which you could teach yourself. Today, I know a teacher and she says, " it doesn't matter if they can read or write just so they can make themselves understood." I says, "well, how do they make themselves understood from a distance?" You can't yell that loud.

Dodson: You have any children that went to valley schools, Mr. Van Meter?

Van Meter: No, I don't have any children. I don't even have any wife.

Dodson: [chuckling] I see.

Van Meter: I look quite independant don't I?

Dodson: [laughing] Well, I don't know that you could tell to look at a person whether they're married or not. Do you feel it's possible?

Dodson: Well, under certain conditions, yes. If you look at a man and there's a button off of his shirt you can be pretty sure that he'd not married. You can tell a married man because he doesn't have a shirt.

[laughter from Boyer]

Dodson: I was afraid you were gonna say that the married man has a sort of a hanged out, brow beaten expression and that's the way you could tell the difference. [laughing]

Van Meter: No. It's just that he doesn't have a shirt.

Dodson: I see. I guess I can't very well ask you questions about your education in the valley or the social life of teenagers in the valley, that sort of thing.

Van Meter: Well, I've lectured at a number of different high schools.

Dodson: Well, tell us about that. What you were doing?

Van Meter: Well, I was there originally as a representative of the American Independant party which I helped to found. We felt that we no longer had any redress from either Republicans or Democrats. They quit representing America. So, a group of us who had been loyal and responsible citizens for our government, our form of government, we decided to form a party of people who were patriotic and who thought enough of their country to vote for what was good for their country. So, a teacher over at Monroe High School heard about it and so he asked me to come over there and speak. He was impressed by the things I was saying so he calls me back two or three times a year. As a result, I spoke over at City College and other high schools and it's just on basic

Americanism.

Dodson: Was the party founded here in the valley then?

Van Meter: Yes, originally it was founded here in California. When George Wallace ran on our party he got thirteen million votes which made it a very viable party and in truth most americans are by nature conservative. That's the nature of america. That's what built america. Government, guns, and guts. When they take God out of the schools and americans guts are represented more by the amount of beer they drink instead of their gumption and once they take away your guns why, you will have lost the very tools that made america gain its independence. So, that's what the American Independant party was representing. It was for that reason why I joined with it but it hurt me very much to see half a classroom in a high school not stand up to salute the flag. In one occasion there was a teacher, and I turned around to protest to the teacher, and he was not even standing up. I thought to myself, well how in the world can I appeal to a teacher, the head of the class, if he doesn't even have the respect of his government. So, later on I asked him and he said, "well, we leave it up to the children. Whatever, they want to do." I says "but they're young. They need guidence."

Dodson: I think the courts have ruled that we do not have the right to order a student to stand up to salute the flag anymore.

Van Meter: Well, I don't put much faith in the courts because the people who founded this country certainly didn't envision people who would have no respect for their government. When you analyze it and you think, "well, I can't order a child." Well, do you let the child grow up by himself? It's up to the parents to guide them. When I was a child, no matter where I was, I respected people. No matter if a stranger told me to quit doing something. If I was doing something wrong, and a stranger would see me and say, "well, young man now you stop that and you go home." I didn't turn around and curse him out. I said, "sir, I will " and off I'd run home. If I was doing something wrong and my mother found out about it she didn't threaten to turn around an sue the poor guy. She never let me play where, unless the people in charge would reprimand me, you know, see that I did what was right. So, children do need guidence. The mother bear slaps the little one when it doesn't do right. And so if you feel that you can not guide a child well then, who does? Do you let the street decide for the child what he's gonna be or do the parents? Just think, a child today can get an abortion without the knowledge of her parents. Just think what that means. It means that a child can go ahead and get in difficulty and they don't even notify her parents and the child could be DEAD. Call the parents up and say your child died in so-and-so hospital and the parents weren't even aware of it. That's terrible. Taking the jurisdiction of the child out of the home.

And you go to some schools and they can't give your kid medication or they can't have them looked at by a doctor unless they have permission from you. If the child has a cold they can't medicate them. They can't do anything and yet, lookit here, they can have an abortion, which means their life can be at stake, and they don't have to notify the parents.

Dodson: You feel then that one change over the way things were when you went to school is in the direction of greater laxity in the treatment of the pupils? That is, less discipline, less guidence?

Van Meter: No. I wouldn't say less discipline. Today there isn't any discipline. I know one class in which I was about to speak, they spent fifteen minutes before the class even got down to order. What was on the list was: get your sweatshirts and the Prom will be here. It took fifteen minutes of the time and that was devoted to non-curricular activites. Which means that that school, that child, there are many things that they do in school that should be done elsewhere. At home. It should be done on their own. Instead of taking school time to take care of those things. And as far as discipline goes, I know when I went to high school, and I was horrified whenever I'd hear a child insolent to his teacher. And it was, it was very uncommon for a child to be insolent. And so we had, we had a group, we had about six other persons and myself, and whenever we found

out that so-and-so was rude to his teacher we'd get out after high school and we'd beat him up and here we were students resenting his insolence to his teacher. Now the students gang up and beat the teacher up. It, it, it does amount to that. Well, I believed in discipline and I loved my teachers. Teachers that, when I had an opportunity to get a tough teacher I always liked the tough teacher. Cause I learned more from tough teachers. They didn't tolerate all the stuff that the other teachers would stand for. And so we loved our teachers. We respected them because I know so many things that I am today was because I had certain teachers that would go out of their way to teach the class. I remember one teacher she used to read us poetry and then she used to make us remember certain lines, the best part of the poetry, and from dozens of oems today I remember those just from the best part of it that she would make us remember, uh, memorize. So today those are part of my life. And just because we had good, fine teachers who weren't concerned with salary. They were dedicated and they were just natural teachers. And so if you, for instance, if you had a teacher who really didn't get too much money and she really wanted to teach, money wouldn't be important. Today it's become a profession. And teaching shouldn't be a profession. It should be done by dedicated people who love teaching, who love the children.

Dodson: Well now, when you would go over and make these talks did you find that the students did behave

and did pay good attention?

Van Meter: Some did and some didn't. You would see those students who were nicely dressed, who were clean looking and just like they were coming out of a, as you would say, a band box. And then there were others who were nothing but tramps. They'd wear hats to class. Their hair was shaggy and dirty. And they had no respect for themselves. I remember speaking to one class and I said, "when I went to school we used to always be taught by our parents to be dressed as neatly as we could." Maybe we didn't always have everything we should, but it was clean and we dressed as well as we could because learning to be clean and to be neat was part of our education in those days. It was part of what we were there to learn. And I says, "I see some of you kids with hats on and your hair is all fussed up in the air and the way you are." I says, " I just wonder what some of you do for halloween."

[laughter from Dodson]

And they took it good naturedly though.

[Boyer laughs]

And, uh, the teacher was a splendid teacher. He would occasionally have to shake the class in order. They'd get excited or I would say something and they would enjoy it and then they'd get a little loud and he'd have to put em back in line. He was a good teacher for that reasnn. He taught

well and he never allowed his children to be disrespectful.

Dodson: What sort of reaction do you feel that you got when you explained to them what the American Party stood for? Did they seem to be impressed with this type of ideal, this sort of program or were they not impressed?

Van Meter: Well, there were those who were very much impressed who said that their parents had often spoken to them about our form of government. And as far as polls that various teachers took, the students said that they enjoyed my discussions much better than the Communist or the Republican and Democrat. Now the Communist didn't allow me to sit in on his discussion to the kids but I didn't mind if he came over when I was talking. And there was one kid there, a young fella from Cuba, and one time the children were getting rude-like and they all wanted to aske quetions at once, and this fella stood up and he said, "you keep quiet and you listen to Mr. Van Meter. When we had that Communist here he wouldn't even let you ask questions." He says, "now get back in order." And this kid, he was just a, and so later on the teacher the teacher said he was kicked out of Cuba because his family just didn't belong there according to Castro. And he says, he knows what it is to lose a country. And see what

happens? But as a rule the children were very good. They were very receptive. And I remember one time, which was quite often, but they would ask me questions. And I would try to respond and actually I didn't know male from female at times. I would say, "yes mam or yes sir" and the whole class would laugh and I wouldn't know why, you know. It was, it was something else. So they took it good naturedly but I says, "as a young man if you haven't enough self-respect to look like a man, you've lost your self-respect. If you haven't any self-respect you won't have any for your parents, your teachers, the police officer on the corner, the cop. You are something without any guidence unless you respect yourself." Which is true. That is something which is lacking in so many children today. They're afraid of nothing and they have no self-respect.

Dodson: You feel that the, uh, costume is sort of a manifestation of that? That the males now are wearing their hair long in a way that used to be just for the females,and so on?

Van Meter: Well, definitely. In the bible, for instance, it has different rules in there for how a man should look and how a woman should look. We recognize that in, in, uh, in dress it has a lot to do with what goes on inside of you. A person, for instance, I used to explain to them, you see a police officer and you know he's an officer but an officer see's you young folks and your hair is mussed up or long and your dressed like tramps. I says, "how does he know you for what you are?"

You might be a fine, wonderful person but I said, "in case of any difficulty, you look like the rest of em. How is he supposed to know that you're not like one of the mob?" I says, "you judge him by his uniform. Therefore, he judges you by yours." And I says, "if you want to be respectable, be proud of yourself. Look like, you know, like you want to and other people respect you plenty."

Dodson: Can you tell us, Mr. Van Meter, anything about agriculture here in the valley when you saw it for the first time. You mentioned to us something about sheep raising here in the valley. Can you tell us about that?

Van Meter: I remember a Mr. Sample who had a number of brothers. And this was in about 1945. Out here in this field around here he used to grow wheat.

Dodson: [interupting] Maybe you'd better, for the sake of the future, tell us the location we're in.

Van Meter: Well, we are right now between Supulveda Boulevard and the San Diego freeway. On Magnolia Boulevard. Just west of us is a freeway and beyond that is the Supulveda basin. Well in that area Mr. Sample, who was a farmer from way back, he used to come in there and let people come in there and let people clean up after he would cut the wheat. There was alot of things left in there. He'd allow them to graze their sheep in there but he used to come

over and use horses and load up the wheat. He had a thrashing machine there and that's where he would grow the wheat. In this basin. It was just a beautiful sight. I have a lot of pictures of those days too and I will see that you get some of them.

Dodson: [very softly] We'd appreciate that very much.

Van Meter: But I remember when in that Supulveda basin when we used to produce great big banana squash. Banana squash is still grown but now they're cutting it up and using it for recreation where they used to grow all these fine vegetables.

Dodson: When you first came into the valley then it was primarily agricultural? There weren't very many houses.

Van Meter: That's right. I would say it was pretty much agricultural. There were orchards and in this area here there were, it was all private homes. We're the last private home here now because all around us are apartments.

Dodson: Mr. Van Meter would you tell us something about this house that we're interviewing you in? I think you said that you built it. And you've also shown us around the house and you've shown us some rather interesting things. A grave of a little boy who died in 1863 I believe. Can you tell us a little bit about the history of the house and the lot and when you accquired them?

Van Meter: Well, we accquired this house in about 1947. We built the house. It was an orchard, an apricot orchard except for the grave marker. We bought it from the gentleman who had just recently purchased it from Louise Fazenda [sp ?] who was known as the "apricot queen of the valley." All this area for quite a distance around was full with wonderful, beautiful apricots. There were, you could get apricots then because the birds weren't as numerous. Now, when the apricots are first appearing the birds have to contend with just a few trees and as a result, they eat them all. I remember how I could go out and take and dry two or three hundred pounds of apricots and have them the whole year round. They'd be just wonderful.

Dodson: Could you explain to us just how you'd dry them at that time?

Van Meter: Well, we would take the ripest ones from the trees. We would break them in half. God put that little groove in there so you could split em real easily. And we would dump the seeds out and lay em out on big flats which were big trays that were maybe six to eight feet long and about three to four feet wide. And you would put them on horses or just anything to hold them up and put them, just have em out or lay em out and leave em in the sun for about three days, course you would cover them at night you wouldn't need chemicals or anything. Then they would dry up and that was it.

Dodson: It only took three days to get them dried out?

Van Meter: That's right. And three days was about all it took. Now you couldn't do that because you would have a smoggy day and the sun wouldn't shine well and the fruit would mildew instead of dry. You could take a hundred pounds of apricots and about ten pounds of it is seeds. The rest reduces to about one tenth so a hundred apricots, pounds of apricots, would produce ten punds of dried fruit. And it was just, uh, that was the thing you would do with your surplus apricots you would go and dry em.

Dodson: Was there a market then, locally, for the dried apricots? The ones you didn't eat yourself?

Van Meter: Well, friends of ours used to want em and maybe we would take two three hundred pounds to the city. We'd dispose of em amoungst our friends and the rest we would dry. We didn't have any surplus because we just made enough for ourselves. We had a cow that used to like em too.

Dodson: q Nowadays I don't think people could afford to feed apricots to a cow.

Van Meter: But how bout that strawberry rhone? [laughs]

Dodson: Do you remember when our college site was a dairy?

Van Meter: Yes I do. And I was over there many years ago. I can't remember the date but it was when you had that first quad set over there. I went there to attend a meeting of the Indians. There were

a bunch of Indians who were holding a meeting on what was known as the "Termination Act." It was gonna eliminate the reservations. Most of the Indians were opposed to the reservation termination act because they felt that counties would move in and take away the land from the Indians by building roads and running various streets through their towns or areas and then they couldn't afford to keep up with the upkeep and assessments. Then they'd take the land away from the Indians. The Indians felt that as long as the Department of reservations was in charge that the reservations were safe for them. That was the first time I was on the college over there. I used to go out to Pierce College when they used to go out there to judge goats. When they had a quad set out there too. We used to go out for the goat shows.

Dodson: You remember then when we first moved over to that site? And what is now the Museum was the first admistration building for the college.

Van Meter: No, I never knew it at that time. I remember there was a big quad set.

Dodson: I see. Uh, one of the things which has happened since you've been here in the valley,of course, is the earthquake of 1971. How did that affect you?

Van Meter: Well, I had been through a number of other earthquakes here. One in '38 and then there was another several years ago previous to that one. I'd say it was in the 50's.

Dodson: Was that the Tehatchepi quake?

Van Meter: That's right. Yes. And so, I'm not afraid of earthquakes. I just say, "well, let it roll." I sort of have an attitude of sorta cooperating with the inevitable.

Dodson: Was your house here damaged in any way?

Van Meter: No. It's concrete block and it's got reinforced steel in it so it's solid,really. It's made of concrete block.

Dodson: It's been my impression from talking with people that this area, which is in the southern part of the valley, the quake wasn't felt strongly. I don't think at the college we had any damage at all, to my knowledge.

Van Meter: You are correct because the Nazaras [sp?] house, which was an orphanage, a catholic orphanage over here on Magnolia and Supulveda. It didn't have any damage as a result of the quake either.

Boyer: Before the earthquake, or around the same time, back in '38 or was it '37, there was a flood in the valley. And was that the one you were telling us about the ties in the railroad tracks?

Van Meter: '38 was the flood in the valley. I remember seeing a couple of persons drowning. I ran to the bridge where I saw some hands disappear and it was a terrible thought to feel that if you'd only arrived two or three seconds sooner you might

have saved somebody. That was a real first class flood in the valley in that year. There was all kinds of damage. I remember buildings that were up there in Studio City, where they had built into the river bed. These brick buildings they little by little just disappeared. I remember thinking that just because you don't see the river sleeping in its bed, it doesn't mean that it won't take it back when it needs it. And that was an example. The river came back and wanted its bed and so it pushed out everybody.

Boyer: What about the railroad ties?

Van Meter: Yes, mam.

Dodson: Can you tell us then about those railroad ties as you saw them?

Van Meter: Along Sherman Way was the Pacific Electric train that you'd take to run through the valley. And from approximately White Oak Boulevard the Ventura train, not the Pacific Electric. The Ventura train that runs through the valley, that railroad train.

Dodson: That's the Southern Pacific.

Van Meter: That's right. Well, it was the one that goes up to Ventura. The tracks run in the riverbed along White Oak and Victory Boulevard. All those tressels were washed out. The whole railroad track and up on Sherman Way, from about White Oak [tape ran out.]

Dodson: We're back with Mr. Van Meter. Go right ahead on that.

Van Meter: Well, the tracks had been undermined. And then the pressure of the flood and debris had gathered up against the tracks in such a way that it had turned the rails over. Several miles of track was running with the rails down with the ties on the upper part of the tracks. It was a strange sight. I have a picture that I took then and over here on the wash, several washes ran right through Van Nuys, it was plenty flooded. We have the Tyrone wash for instance. Course today we have a street. The water was four or five feet deep in that wash. That's right here on Magnolia. We had a regular river running down here.

Voice: Was that the L.A. river?

Van Meter: No, this was the Tyrone wash right up here on Tyrone street, I think. Flood waters just washed right through the valley. There was areas where there just was a big, fine, genuine flood.

Dodson: Was there much damage that you saw to houses, then? What are your recollections of that?

Van Meter: My recollections of the houses was that there were lots of them. Especially, out in Studio City where the houses had been built out on land that had been taken back from the river. Half of the house was washed away. All, there were numerous houses with the whole back of the

house gone. You're looking right into the bedrooms. There was a house that fell right into the river and washed out to sea.

Dodson: Do you have any idea of what the casualties were on that?

Van Meter: Sir, I do not recall. I know there were quite a few people drowned.

Dodson: I imagine this area that we're in right now was not hit by the flood was it?

Van Meter: Yes, it was.

Dodson: It was?

Van Meter: Yes. You see, the flood control basin which is the Supulveda basin, they built that dam for the specific purpose of holding back water that had, at various times, flooded this area. So they have it fixed now where they can let the water out gradually. However, they have numerous other small dams which they call "check dams." In the hills surrounding us, the water gathers up there, the Department of Water and Power have so many more reserviors where the water collects. Therefore, it doesn't flood in the valley as it used to. Plus, all the storm drains. It's to the point where that hazard is pretty much allieviated.

Dodson: Paula, do you have anything you'd like to ask about?

Boyer: No. Not about the flood. I was looking at

our list and you remember World War II in the valley? After it? You moved here right? You bought the land after World War II.

Van Meter: Yes? But I was in the city mostly when World War II.

Boyer: But there were a lot of people living out in the valley then, weren't there? After World War II?

Van Meter: Yes. The people after World War II they got out of the valley. At least, I got out of the valley because there were conditions arising there that I did not like. We had a nice home on West Adams Heights. It was between Western and Crenshaw on Adams. A nice, big, fine residential district. There were conditions arising there that we just didn't feel safe. So we came to the valley primarily to get away from the congestion of the city. To be without the fears that had to do with the city. That's the reason that we came here and the land was pretty and we wanted to put our feet back in the ground and grow things. That's what most other people moved out here for. However, the city has followed us today and so the same thing is happening to us here that happened to us when we had a place in Los Angeles.

Dodson: You feel that there has been much change in the crime situation since you moved out here. You feel less safe than you did in say, 1946? When you first came?

Van Meter: Very much so. I remember we never bothered to lock our doors when we first moved out here. But, this place has been robbed two or three times and the police, we don't even bother to report it anymore because they never do anything about it. And one time the place was robbed and over here at a house nearby there had been some hippies living and I could see one of the pictures that had been stolen from here. When I told the police about it they said, "Well, you better just forget about it. Don't bother those people. They can just make trouble for you." And then I remember the school next door was robbed and it was robbed and the robbers were right from behind the school on another street and they used the dolly that belonged to the school to push the refrigerators and things out of the building. The police came and they made them return the dolly. [laughter] They were quite severe on em. But that's a fact.

Voice: What about one time when it snowed? Didn't I see a picture of you with it snowing?

Van Meter: Yes.

Dodson: The snow's never amounted to very much have they?

Van Meter: Just one year. I guess that was in the 50's. It covered the ground for quite a while. I'd say it lasted for a day in a half anyway.

Voice: It was on the tree's and the blacktop and all.

Van Meter: Yeah. This place was covered for a few days.

Dodson: What would you regard as the most important thing that has happened in the valley since you have been connected with it?

Van Meter: I couldn't say sir. I don't know what would be the most important thing that has happend in the valley. I don't really think there's been anything important.

[laughter from Dodson]

Dodson: Well, is there anything in the history of the valley that you have taken a particular satisfaction in?

Van Meter: Yes. I have taken an interest in the historical qualities of the valley. The [inaudible] place. The Adonis Adobe. [Leonis Adobe] There's a place over on Cahuenga. I'm just in love with the history of the valley. That's the thing that facinates me.

Dodson: Well, I do think that we have a facinating history. In fact, the whole of Southern California does. With it's occupations by various groups since it's first discovery by, I think it was Portolla in 1769.

Van Meter: Yes. And I often think of what a sight it must have been for him to look over the ridge and into the valley. I believe he was supposed to have come over around, uh. What is the name of that street over in Woodland Hills that goes out over the hills? Topanga. I believe it was in that area that he first came over the hills.

What a sight to have looked down and have seen nothing but Indian villages down there. It must have been a marvelous sight to have looked down there. No pollution, no smog, no nothing. Just clean, pretty, fresh air.

Dodson: Now, that brings me to another question. Is there anything about the history of the valley that you especially regret? That you feel is bad since you've lived here?

Van Meter: Well, there are a number of things and that is the beautiful agricultural land that can grow food. To see it covered up with asphalt.

[laughter interupts Mr. Van Meter's response]

Dodson: Do we have a differing opinion in the room on that one?

Voice: I think the worst thing about the history of the valley was they wrote that song I'll make the San Fernando Valley My Home.

Dodson: You think that caused too many people to come out and make it their home?

Van Meter: I don't remember that song. But it's true that the beautiful land that can produce food. Cause you see, it's the beautiful agriculture land of the valley that used to support the city to a great extent. When I think of the beautiful vineyards and the orchards and the, those things that were out here in the valley but when, you see, my family originally came to this country because

they were tired of parasites. You can call them Kings and Dukes and Counts and all that but to a great extent they were living off of the people. They came to this country where they thought they could gain political freedom and through political freedom have all the other freedoms. Unless you have political freedom you're not free. However, now, we have the same bunch of parasites today that are eating off the people only today we call them bureaucrats or other names but its the same type of depridation that is a part of government officials who are taking it away from the people just like they used to. And the result is that they take away the money the people make and remove from then the things that can mean the difference between a pursuit of happiness. Sometimes maybe a few dollars more that they take from you can destroy your pursuit of happiness. And instead you merely exist instead of living and enjoying life. They take so much away from you that it's a matter of working to pay your taxes and just to keep alive. To just merely exist. Where you're supposed to enjoy and have a pursuit of happiness and by that means be happy as a good citizen.

Dodson: Speaking of taxes. I imagine you've seen them icrease very considerably since you've been in the valley? Have you not?

Van Meter: Yes. Our place in particular was originally thirty seven dollars. It is now thirty five hundred. They do absolutely nothing more for me than they ever did before. They still reluctantly pick up our garbage and what other things they do

are nothing anymore. I've never needed the Fire Department or any of the public agencies to do anything for me.

Dodson: Now that first figure, the thirty five dollars, was that in 1946?

Van Meter: Yes. That was in 1946. Then it climbed gradually to two or three hundred and then it made a jump in about 1968 it jumped then to $2600.

Dodson: Oh My!

Van Meter: Yes. Since then it's been climbing so now it's $3500.

Boyer: Could you tell us the amount of land that you have here?

Van Meter: Two acres.

Boyer: This is a large track of land for this area of the valley isn't it?

Van Meter: Yes. It's the largest track that's left outside of the Nazaras [sp?] House. Over here where they're putting up these condominiums.

Boyer: The building down the street?

Van Meter: Yes. That used to be the, uh, owned by the poor sisters of Nazareth. They sold it for two million six hundred thousand. I just wonder how much the rich sisters have.

Boyer: How have you managed to hold onto your land? So many people sold.

Van Meter: Many people who had large tracts of land and grew vineyards and orchards enjoyed their land. As taxes increased they gradually cut their land up little by little and sold it off. Sold it off merely to exist so they could keep part of it. That shows, you know, how unfair the taxation is when people have to sell part of what they own in order to pay. It isn't taxes anymore. It's confiscation. In the name of taxes they are confiscating when they are taking away enough land from enough people. Today we have about approximately forty percent of the people own their land where it used to be eighty percent. They were homeowners. They owned their property. Today, we have a mass of people living in apartments. We have people who are there because they can't afford their homes anymore. Their attitude is a little different from the home owner. Good solid homes make for a fine family and it makes for a good community. And when people own their land, we used to have laws like the Homestead Act that protect the home. It made it impossible to sue and take away the home from people because the people then recognized that a good, fine home made for a better nation. Today, everything is done to break the family up and destroy it. Fortunately, we were able to hold onto this land. I'm sure we can always do it.

Boyer: You were right about the homesteading. A lot of people don't realize that they can still do it. We can do it.

Dodson: I think the land though that you would get by homesteading now is not very valuable.

Boyer: You could homestead your own home. So they could never take it away.

Dodson: Oh, that's true.

Boyer: So it's whatever you buy. You could homestead it.

Van Meter: That prevents an irresponsible member of the family from selling it and destroying a fine home.

Dodson: Now, we hear a great deal at the present time about minorities and minority rights. To your knowledge has their ever been any minority frictions here in the valley?

Van Meter: No. Nothing that I know about outside of some difficulties out at San Fernando High School. Incidents between different groups of kids up there.

Dodson: But nothing here in the southern part of the valley.

Van Meter: Not that I know of. Actually, I am a member of the minority. I'm a landowner.

Dodson: [laughing] Well, that's a minority that doesn't get much consideration.

Van Meter: No, you're right. But, you see, land taxes originated mostly in England. The rich people had big, vast trats of land and there wasn't any public money. So the townships would put a tax on these vast estates in order to support schools. They were big businesses, these lands, in those days. Here, we're not in business. A private home should never be taxed under any condition. It's not a business. A home should be given every advantage as possible in order to keep it intact. So, when you tax peoples homes that are not businesses you are destroying it. I remember when taxes used to be a nuisance. Now, they're a burden. To many people, to many people it is their life. When you take an elderly people out of some little home that they have lived in thirty or fourty years and push them out into some tract somewhere you have killed those people. They can not take it. It's very, very difficult to watch a little family being kicked out of their home. If an earthquake has destroyed your home you can understand it. If your house is burnt down you can understand it. But, it's difficult for people to understand that people can be kicked out of their homes, and that home is no longer yours because somebody has put claims against it and they are taking it away because you can not get out here and support welfare, or you can not do the things and other people take advantage of you. In other words, you can't run away from certain taxes. Other

people can avoid taxes. If you have a home and some welfare group decides that it wants to tax the rest of the people for their welfare and you no longer have any control over your taxes. It is criminal to take elderly people and put them out in the street and take away their home because they can not afford to pay into the welfare of other people.

Dodson: Did you know, personally, any people in the valley who might be called "pioneers?"

Van Meter: Well, I would say I knew all of them but not for very long for the reason that I rode the last big, red streetcar to leave the valley. And on there was Whitsett and eight or ten of the big developers. Along with Monty Montana and a lot of different characters. The steetcar ran from up there in Woodland Hills to the end of the track in, what's the name of that town, uh, Canoga Park. It ran from there all the way to the city. They would stop at all the different little communities. There were big signs along the way where people used to wait for the street-car and on the side of this big, red car was "goodbye old red." They gave us box lunches and different things and I had the pleasure of riding with all those people. Then, we went down to the subway terminal building. Most people don't know that we have a subway in Los Angeles. It comes out from the subway terminal building at Fifth and Main. It comes out under the city and used to come out over there on Temple street.

The Glendale line used to come out there. The cars would go to Glendale and they'd go back under the street. Many of the big, red cars are still stored in that subway terminal building. Down in the subway there.

Boyer: [inaudible]

Van Meter: Yes. I think it's Fifth and Main.

Dodson: Not Fifth and Main.

Van Meter: Well, Sixth and Main. Where the bus depot used to be.

Boyer: Oh! I know where it is. Sure. I know. It's about there.

Dodson: Uh, no Paula. You're thinking of the old station on Main but we have something else that maybe you don't know about that we call the subway terminal. And I don't know. . [interupted by Boyer]

Boyer: Oh. But the bus depot's still on Main.

Dodson: Yes. But we have something different from that. It's Fifth and Olive or Fifth and Grand. Something like that. Isn't that right? It's on one of the streets that runs past Pershing Square.

Boyer: Yeah, really.

Dodson: Yeah. It's entirely different from what you think. There isn't any subway in the area that you're thinking about but there is one. It's about a mile long in the area that I'm mentioning.

Boyer: Around Grand huh?

Dodson: Yes. I don't know whether we still call that building the subway terminal or not. The subway terminal building.

Van Meter: There was alot of trains and cars that used to come into the building and I'm pretty sure that it was on Main street.

Dodson: No. You see, the P.E. had two stations. It had one on Main but it had another one on one of the streets that goes past Pershing Square. And the subway terminal that had the Glendale and San Fernando lines. . [interupted by Van Meter]

Van Meter: Well, I'm sure you know better than I but I had an idea that's where it was.

Dodson: Course, that makes me feel like a pioneer myself, [laughing] to know about the subway terminal.

Van Meter: Do you know where the word "pioneer" comes from?

Dodson: No, I don't.

Van Meter: It's a German word. It means, "to be the first one there." Like we say "the early bird." To use that expression. The pioneers in the German

army were the ones who got there first and put up the telephone lines. So, it means "the first people there." The Americans, there are so many Germans in our country to start with, got the name "pioneers" and that's how they got it.

Dodson: Perhaps you could tell us the names of some of the other people in the valley that you think we should interview.

Van Meter: Well, I once mentioned to you about Mr. Van Onie [sp?] that I thought was. . [interupted by Dodson.]

Dodson: Yes. We have been out to see him.

Van Meter: And, uh, there's no others that I know are comprable to Mr. Van Onie but I'm sure there are many and sometime, if you put an article in the Greensheet that if you've lived in the valley for a certain length of time drop us a line we'd like to interview you, because there's no doubt, quite a few people here that do not think its anything unusual. People that have lived something never feel that it's unusual.

Dodson: No. We realize that to someone coming fifty years later it will seem unusual. That's perfectly true.

Van Meter: I remember our discussion about we know so much about the Romans except about what they did in their daily lives.

Dodson: Yes. Because nobody put that sort of thing down.

Van Meter: There's nothing unusual about that. That's why often when I hear somebody bragging about what they did in the war generally, they never did it. A person who's done something that doesn't see anything unusual about it has nothing to brag.

Dodson: Well, we certainly appreciate what you've told us Mr. Van Meter and we appreciate your showing us around. You have so many interesting things here.

Van Meter: [Response is inaudible.]

Dodson: Well, thank you very much for having us come and hearing and seeing all of this.

Van Meter: It's been my pleasure sir.

You have been listening to an interview with Mr. Daniel Van Meter of 15357 Magnolia in Sherman Oaks. The interview was conducted by Dr. James L. Dodson, curator of the Los Angeles Valley College Historical Museum and by Miss Paula Boyer, field deputy to Dr. Dodson. Several other voices will be heard at intervals on this tape. One of the other voices is that of Mr. James Van Meter, brother of Mr. Daniel Van Meter. The date is January 5, 1977.